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ONE HUNDRED TENTH CONGRESS

U.S. House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS OF
OFFICIAL CONDUCT

Washington, DC 20515-6328

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MEMORANDUM FOR ALL MEMBERS, OFFICERS, AND EMPLOYEES

FROM: Committee on Standards of Official Conduct
Stephanie Tubbs Jones, Chairwoman
Doc Hastings, Ranking Republican Member

SUBJECT: Annual Ethics Training Requirement for 2008

House Rule XI, clause 3(b) requires each House employee to certify to the Standards Committee by January 31 of each year that the individual completed ethics training during the preceding year. New employees¹ are required to take ethics training within 60 days of beginning employment. This memorandum outlines the ethics training requirement for calendar year 2008, including the certification process and potential penalties for failure to fulfill the training requirement.

SUBSTANCE OF THE TRAINING REQUIREMENT

The requirement that all employees receive annual ethics training was first imposed in 2007, and the Committee determined that the purpose of the rule would best be served by requiring all House employees to take one hour of ethics training, intended to provide a comprehensive overview of the rules and standards of conduct applicable to all employees. Senior staff² were required to take an additional hour of specialized training on topics related to senior staff. The Committee required Capitol Hill-based employees to attend live training sessions, while district staff were permitted to satisfy their training requirements by watching videotapes of training sessions on HouseNet. The Committee conducted 85 public training sessions, and more than ten thousand employees participated in training, either in a public training session or through other approved means, during 2007. The Committee is identifying and will individually address those employees who failed to comply with the training requirement.

¹ A "new" House employee for purposes of this memorandum is an individual who first began employment with the House after November 1, 2007 and did not complete ethics training in 2007. Any employees who completed ethics training as new employees in 2007 are required to take the general ethics training in 2008.

² "Senior staff" is any employee – either new or current – who is paid at the senior staff level, which for 2008 is an annual rate of \$114,468.

The Committee believes that those requirements were successful in providing all staff the opportunity to develop a common understanding of the breadth and scope of House ethics rules, and the Committee therefore intends to continue those requirements for **new** employees in 2008. For **all other employees**, the training requirements will be modified slightly in 2008, to give those employees greater choice in participating in ethics training that will benefit them. The details of the 2008 training requirements are set forth below.

New Employees. In 2008, new employees are required to take the same comprehensive ethics training offered to all employees in 2007. As in 2007, new employees who work in Capitol Hill offices are required to attend live sessions, while new district staff may watch the videotaped training sessions available on HouseNet. As noted above, all new employees must take that training within 60 days of beginning House employment. **New senior staff** will be required to take the additional hour of specialized training, and may do so either by attending live training sessions or by watching a videotape of the session on HouseNet. Senior staff training for new employees may be taken at any time in 2008.

All Other Employees. All House employees who are not "new" employees in 2008 must take one hour of ethics training in 2008. The Committee will offer a variety of ethics training sessions in 2008, and staff will be able to take the training in different ways. Live training sessions will be offered at various times throughout the year on several different topics, and staff may attend one of those training sessions. Topics will include campaign activity, financial disclosure, and other topics to be decided by the Committee. Some of those training sessions will be videotaped, and the videotapes will be made available for viewing on HouseNet. Staff (including Capitol-Hill based staff) may satisfy their training requirement by watching the training videos. Finally, the Committee anticipates offering training in other forms in 2008 which will satisfy the one hour training requirement. Scheduled training sessions will be announced on the Committee's website as they are scheduled, and the availability of training videotapes will also be posted on the website.

CERTIFYING ATTENDANCE

Any staff who attend a live ethics training sessions must sign in at the start of the training and remain for the entire session. Signing the attendance sheet will fulfill the employee's obligation to certify to the Committee that the individual completed the required training. Any employee who attends a live training session but fails to sign in on the attendance sheet will not be given credit for attending and must re-take the training.

Any staff who complete an on-line ethics program – whether for new, senior, or current staff – must fill out the appropriate certificate of completion, have it signed by their staff supervisor (such as a chief of staff or district director), and send it to the Standards Committee as soon as possible following completion of the training. Shared staff (*i.e.*, individuals who work for more than House Member or committee) should indicate on their form each office for which they work, although only one supervisor's signature is required. Completed forms should be faxed to the Standards Committee at (202) 225-7392.

Prior to January 31, 2009, each Member must send a letter to the Committee certifying that each of the Member's employees completed the required training during 2008. For staff

of a committee, the letter should be signed by the committee chairman or ranking member, as appropriate. The letter should list the names of each employee who is still on the payroll, and what type or types of training (general, new employee, or senior staff) the individual completed. Shared staff should be included in the letter sent by each office for which they work. The letter should also identify by name any employees who failed to complete the training and provide an explanation for each why the requirement was not fulfilled.

PENALTIES FOR FAILURE TO COMPLY

Note that training – for new or current employees – must be completed during calendar year 2008. The Committee will not offer any make-up sessions for individuals who fail to complete the training in a timely manner. Any House employee who fails to complete the required training during calendar year 2008 will be subject to the sanctions described below.

For 2008, the Committee will undertake a two-step process to penalize any employee who failed to comply with the training requirement. First, the Committee will send a letter to each Member, indicating the name(s) of that Member's employees whom Committee records indicate failed to complete training. The Member or named employee(s) will then have two weeks to provide documentation to the Committee that an individual so identified did, in fact, complete the required training. At the close of that two-week period, the Committee may publicize the names of all employees, together with their employing Member, committee, or office, who failed to satisfy the ethics training requirement. Other penalties may also be imposed as appropriate.

Questions about any aspect of the ethics training requirement should be directed to the Committee at (202) 225-7103.